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ABSTRACT

A study involved the creation of a 20-variable checklist for children's and young adult war literature, to be utilized as a data-recording instrument for 24 examples of literature. The checklist components were based upon a combination of cognitive and affective attributes assisting in the formulation of attitudes toward war displayed by children's and young adult war literature. All 24 examples of children's and young adult Vietnam War literature were published after the dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in 1982. Results indicated the influence of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial upon 18 out of 24 of the texts and the timeliness of materials dealing with memorials the media displayed. Implications of the study suggest that children's and young adult literature has arisen from the dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The study revealed that attitudes toward the Vietnam War displayed in children's and young adults' literature mirror society's attitudes since this literature tends to continue to reflect societal trends and issues. An analysis checklist for children's and young adult war literature has merit for use as a data-recording instrument for examples of children's and young adult war literature dealing with wars of the past, present-day, and the future. (Four figures are included; the appendixes include literature analyzed for the study and literature with Vietnam Veterans Memorial inclusion. Thirty-six references are attached.) (MG)

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Vietnam Literature

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An Analysis of Attitudes Toward the Vietnam War
Displayed in Children's and Young Adult Literature

Published After 1982

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Mississippi State University

A paper presented at the Annual Meeting of
Mid-South Educational Research Association

New Orleans, LA

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Running Head: VIETNAM LITERATURE

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Introduction

Children's and young adult literature tends to mirror societal trends and issues. As society has begun to come to terms with the Vietnam War, examples of children and young adult literature have reflected the desire for comprehension of a complex issue and the desire for reconciliation among members of society, to include the smallest member, the child.

Review of the Literature

A study of societal issues has a place in the Social Studies classroom (Totten, 1986). Well-written children's and young adult literature dealing with societal issues may be effectively incorporated into the Social Studies classroom. Books providing insight into society's interactions with other peoples provide an understanding of the notion of time so that the reader and listener may visualize the rapport between current day life and events that have previously occurred in history. Examples of recently published children's literature have provided authentic experiences for children (Sutherland and Arbuthnot, 1986). Common (1986) stresses the value of

incorporating stories into the Social Studies classroom by stating that stories provide a contextualized information. Appropriate children's literature may be incorporated into any Social Studies discussion to provide insight for the teacher and the student into the topic under study and to create a component of lessons which meet both student and teacher needs (Welton and Mallon, 1988). Hammer (1986) states that young adult literature is utilized in educational settings to accomplish numerous goals, to include the aiding in the comprehension of one's self. This notion may relate the usage of children's and young adult literature across the academic disciplines. Works of literature provide the text participant with opportunities to understand the culture of diverse heritages (Norton, 1987).

In addressing the study of the Vietnam War in particular, the May 2, 1986 issue of Junior Scholastic included the Vietnam War play The War at Home by Clare McHugh for use in the middle or junior high school Reading, Language Arts, or Social Studies class to aid in the clarification of the affective nature of the

Vietnam War. DallaGrana (1988) discusses the effectiveness of using selected examples of young adult Vietnam War literature songs from the Vietnam War era in the Social Studies class as a component of a unit on the Vietnam War. Kirshner and Weisberg (1988) have successfully incorporated young adult Vietnam War literature into the course they have created dealing with Vietnam. Wilcox (1988) promotes the use of Vietnam War literature in the secondary school Social Studies classroom. Larry Rottman utilizes young adult war literature in his Vietnam Literature class held at Southwest Missouri State University (Ansley, 1990).

Definition of Terms

Children's and Young Adult Literature

Neither children's nor young adult literature is easily definable. There is an unclear division between children's and young adult literature. Children's literature consists of well-written texts which have an appeal for children (Sutherland and Arbuthnot, 1986).

In clarifying the definition of children's literature, Huck (1987) reinforces the notion that quality children's literature is, above all else,

quality literature. Quality young adult literature is quality literature. Literature deals with the cognitive and affective domains of human experiences (Huck, 1987). As a result, universal children's literature may be read at all levels. However, a book written especially for children must be developmentally appropriate for them (Huck, 1987; Welton and Mallan, 1988).

Children's and young adult war literature would include children's and young adult literature displaying the theme and/or the influence of a war fought locally or worldwide in the past, present, or future.

Memorial

Funk & Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary of the English Language provided the following definition of the noun memorial: "Something, as a monument, a building, a tablet, a festival, or an inscription, designed or adapted to keep in remembrance a person, an event, a place or anything regarded as worthy of peculiar honor or record" (p. 1549, 1963).

Attitude

Katz (1960) describes attitude as a subjective concept subscribing to the cognitive and affective domains.

Description of the Study

This quasi quantitative, qualitative study involved the creation of a 20 variable checklist for children's and young adult war literature (Appendix A). The checklist components were based upon a combination of cognitive and affective attributes assisting in the formulation of attitudes toward war displayed by children's and young adult war literature. The checklist was fabricated to be utilized as a data-recording instrument for works of children's and young adult war literature.

Content validity of the checklist was determined by analysis by the researcher and colleagues in the fields of early childhood, elementary and secondary education, and children's and young adult literature. Lewis (1985) discusses the influence of the father and film in the creation of the concept of soldiering held

by United States military participants in the Vietnam War. Baritz (1985) states:

Young men got drafted as their fathers had in earlier wars. Sometimes brothers were already in. You had to do it because it had been done before, and probably would always be done, and you had to take your turn...to do the right thing, as that was defined in the family and in the small circle of good friends (p. 278).

The influence of family and film aided in the formulation of attitudes held toward the Vietnam War (Lewis, 1985). Further demonstrations of reliability and validity will be obtained through employment of the checklist in specified education settings.

This study specifically employed the checklist as a data-recording instrument for 24 examples of children's and young adult Vietnam War literature selected as a result of "purposeful sampling" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The 24 books or excerpts thereof could conceivably be incorporated into either an elementary or secondary school Social Studies class or utilized at both levels (Appendix B). All 24 examples of

children's and young adult Vietnam War literature were published after the dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in 1982.

Insert Figure 1 about here

The concept of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial emerged from 18 out of the 24 books analyzed (Appendix C).

Insert Figure 2 about here

As a result, attitudes displayed by the literary works with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial inclusion were specifically addressed.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study took the "emergent design" (Lincoln and Guba, p. 102, 1985) form as defined as a component of a qualitative study. From the data recording device of the Analysis Checklist for children's and young adult war literature, the 24 examples of children's and young

adult war literature analyzed, and the time period of 1990, various facets of the study emerged.

As the 24 examples of children's and young adult war literature were analyzed, the researcher noted the influence of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial upon 18 out of 24 of the texts (Appendix B) and the timeliness of materials dealing with memorials the media displayed.

Insert Figure 3 about here

1990 Memorial Day remembrances that incorporated the concept of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (Norman, 1990; Memmott, 1990) into them. New Jersey and Mississippi discussed plans for state Vietnam Veterans Memorials (Garnder, 1990; Roster, 1990). On the 20th anniversary of the tragedy at Kent State, Kent State dedicated "its first memorial to the tragedy, 'The May 4 Memorial'" (Plett, 1990).

As the crisis in the Middle East escalated, attitudes toward the Vietnam War were displayed by comparisons made between the United States' involvement in the Middle East situation to the involvement of the

United States in Vietnam (Keen, 1990; Apple Jr., 1990; Karnow, 1990).

The public is, indeed, expressing a "Rekindled Interest in the Vietnam War" (Karnow, p. 4A, 1990). As a result, the researcher has been constantly asked to suggest titles of children's and young adult Vietnam War literature. The timeliness of the topic adds credence to the Analysis Checklist for children's and young adult war literature (Appendix A) and the twenty-four examples of children's and young adult Vietnam War literature utilized in the study (Appendix B).

The 18 out of the 24 books with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial inclusion (Appendix C) add a clarity to a complex issue. This clarity extends itself to the smallest member of society, the child. Members of society and the family meet with the Vietnam Veteran, the adolescent, and the child at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Insert Figure 4 about here

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial seems to ground the abstract affective nature of war into the concrete. After a visit to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial to search for his father's name, pre-adolescent Park of Katherine Paterson's Park's Quest (1988) affectively and cognitively describes his feelings stemming from his visit to the Wall; "It's beautiful, it made me know...it made me feel...it made me think..." (p. 33).

The influence of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial cannot be underestimated. The fact that 18 out of the 24 books analyzed in the study included the concept of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial gives credence to the impact of the Memorial.

War, by its very nature, is an abstract concept relating to the cognitive and affective domains. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial becomes a focal point. It grounds an abstraction into the concrete, thus adding to the clarity of a complex issue. The child in the adult demands the concrete. The allusions to the child, the affect, and the tactile aspects of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial make this notion clear

(Lopes, 1987; Hahn, 1988; Paterson, 1988; Bunting, 1990).

Bunting's universal child in The Wall (1990) describes his father's search for his father at the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial and the physical contact made with the Memorial: "Dad's rubbing the name, rubbing and rubbing as if he wants to wipe it away. Maybe he just wants to remember the way it feels.

He lifts me so I can touch it, too"

(unnumbered page).

No example of literature studied suggested that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial presumed itself to be a magical cureall for the lingering malaise associated with the Vietnam War. Yet, analysis of the literature studied, suggested that the Memorial brings one back to his/her origins through the child. Society comes full circle at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Insert Figure 4 Here

The authors and characters of the examples of children's and young adult war literature analyzed appeared to reflect Stanley Karnow's attitude toward the Vietnam War; "My general attitude, to the extent that I can sum it up succinctly, has been one of humility in the face of a vast and complicated subject" (p. X, 1983).

Implications of the study are many. Children's and young adult literature has arisen from the dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Pilgrimages have been made there by members of society seeking lost loved ones and seeking an attempt to base an affective abstraction into a concrete entity (Scruggs and Swerdlow, 1985; Mason, 1985; Hahn, 1988; Paterson, 1988; Bunting, 1990).

The Korean War is now being suggested as a war wherein its U.S. participants did not receive the honor to which they were entitled (Fleming and Kaufman, 1990; Bennett, 1990; Elfin, 1990). Controversy is currently ensuing over the construction of a Korean War Veterans Memorial (Huckshorn, 1990). As controversy arose over the concept of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (Scruggs

and Swerdlow, 1985) and children's and young adult literature was created by the Memorial concept, will examples of children's and young adult literature arise from the Korean War Veterans Memorial controversy and dedication? What memorials and examples of children's and young adult literature will arise from the Middle East situation? While at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, adolescent Kelly of Hahn's December Stillness (1988) states:

It seemed to me that everything around me had something to do with the war...In other places, you could find World War I and World War II memorials..." Kelly asks: "When the Third World War blew us all to atoms, who would be left to design the memorial?" (p. 176).

The Analysis Checklist for children's and young adult war literature may be utilized in conjunction with examples of forthcoming children's and young adult literature as well as with examples of children's and young adult literature dealing with wars of the past.

The researcher will be further testing the reliability and validity of the checklist as she

utilizes the checklist as a data-recording instrument in her children's literature classes when teaching the historical fiction genre of children's literature.

A personality profile of each student will be determined upon the basis of the checklist and the responses to the literature.

Examples of the children's Vietnam War literature analyzed will be incorporated into a middle to junior high school level Social Studies class to test the effectiveness of the inclusion of children's Vietnam War literature as an aid for studying Vietnam.

The checklist and the examples of children's and young adult Vietnam War literature analyzed may be included in classes at the higher education level dealing with Educational Foundations, Human Growth and Development, Educational Psychology, Early Childhood and Elementary Education.

In summary, the study revealed that attitudes toward The Vietnam War displayed in children's and young adults' literature mirror society's attitudes as children's and young adult literature tend to continue to reflect societal trends and issues. An analysis

checklist for children's and young adult war literature has merit for use as a data-recording instrument for examples of children's and young adult war literature dealing with wars of the past, present-day, and the future.

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Appendix A

An Analysis Checklist

for Children's and Young Adult War Literature

A copy of the Checklist is not included in the paper
because it is in the process of being copyrighted.

Appendix B

Literature analyzed for the Study

- Baritz, L. (1985), Backfire, Ballantine: N.Y.
- Beesley, S. W. (1987), Vietnam: The Heartland Remembers, Berkley Books: N.Y.
- Brandon, H. (1984), Casualties: Death in Vietnam, St. Martin's Press: N.Y.
- Bunting, E. (1990), The Wall, Clarion Books: N.Y.
- Christian, D. and Hoffer, W. (1990), Victor Six, McGraw-Hill: N.Y.
- Currey, R. (1988), Fatal Light, Penguin: N.Y.
- Dugan, C. and Weiss, S. (1988), The American Experience in Vietnam, Boston: Boston.
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- Hahn, M. D. (1988), December Stillness, Avon: N.Y.
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- Mason, B. A. (1985), In Country, Harper & Row: N.Y.
- Myers, W. D. (1988), Fallen Angels, Scholastic: N.Y.
- Norman, G. (1990), Bouncing Back, Houghton Mifflin: Boston
- O'Brien, T. (1990), The Things They Carried, Houghton Mifflin: Boston
- Palmer, L. (1988), Shrapnel in the Heart: Letters and Remembrances from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Vintage: N.Y.
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- Paulsen, G. (1987), The Crossing, Dell: N.Y.
- Scruggs, J. C. and Swerdlow, J. L. (1985) To Heal a Nation: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Harper & Row: N.Y.
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- Warren, J. A. (1990), Portrait of a Tragedy: America and the Vietnam War, Lothrop, Lee & Shephard: N.Y.

Wheeler, J. (1984), Touched With Fire: The Future of
the Vietnam Generation, Watts: N.Y.

Willenson, K. (1987), The Bad War: An Oral History of
the Vietnam War, New American Library: N.Y.

Appendix C

Literature with Vietnam Veterans Memorial Inclusion

- Baritz, L. (1985), Backfire, Ballantine: N.Y.
- Beesley, S. W. (1987), Vietnam: The Heartland Remembers, Berkley Books: N.Y.
- Brandon, H. (1984), Casualties: Death in Vietnam, St. Martin's Press: N.Y.
- Bunting, E. (1990), The Wall, Clarion Books: N.Y.
- Christian, D. and Hoffer, W. (1990), Victor Six, McGraw-Hill: N.Y.
- Dugan, C. and Weiss, S. (1988), The American Experience in Vietnam, Boston: Boston.
- Edelman, B., Ed. (1985), Dear America: Letters from Vietnam, Pocket Books: N.Y.
- Hahn, M. D. (1988), December Stillness, Avon: N.Y.
- Hoobler, D. and T. (1990), Vietnam: Why We Fought, Knopf: N.Y.
- Lopes, S. (1987), The Wall: Images and offerings form the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Collins: N.Y.
- Mason, B. A. (1985), In Country, Harper & Row: N.Y.

Palmer, L. (1988), Shrapnel in the Heart: Letters and Remembrances from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial,

Vintage: N.Y.

Paterson, K. (1988), Park's Quest, E. P. Dutton: N.Y.

Scruggs, J. C. and Swerdlow, J. L. (1985) To Heal a Nation: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Harper &

Row: N.Y.

Summers, H. G., Jr., (1985), Vietnam War Almanac, Facts

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Warren, J. A. (1990), Portrait of a Tragedy: America and the Vietnam War, Lothrop, Lee & Shephard:

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Wheeler, J. (1984), Touched With Fire: The Future of the Vietnam Generation, Watts: N.Y.

Willenson, K. (1987), The Bad War: An Oral History of the Vietnam War, New American Library: N.Y.

Figure 1

Vietnam Literature
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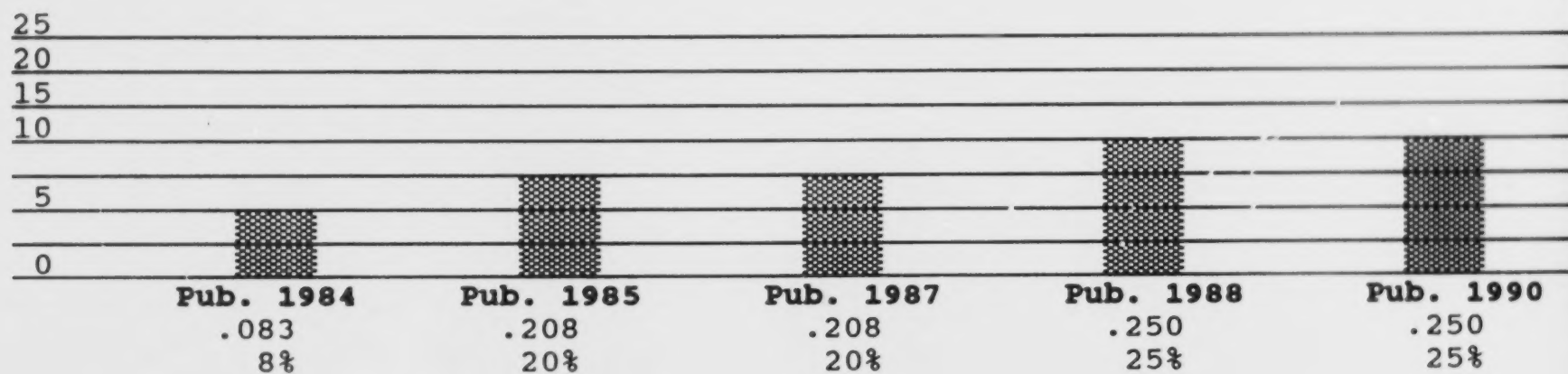
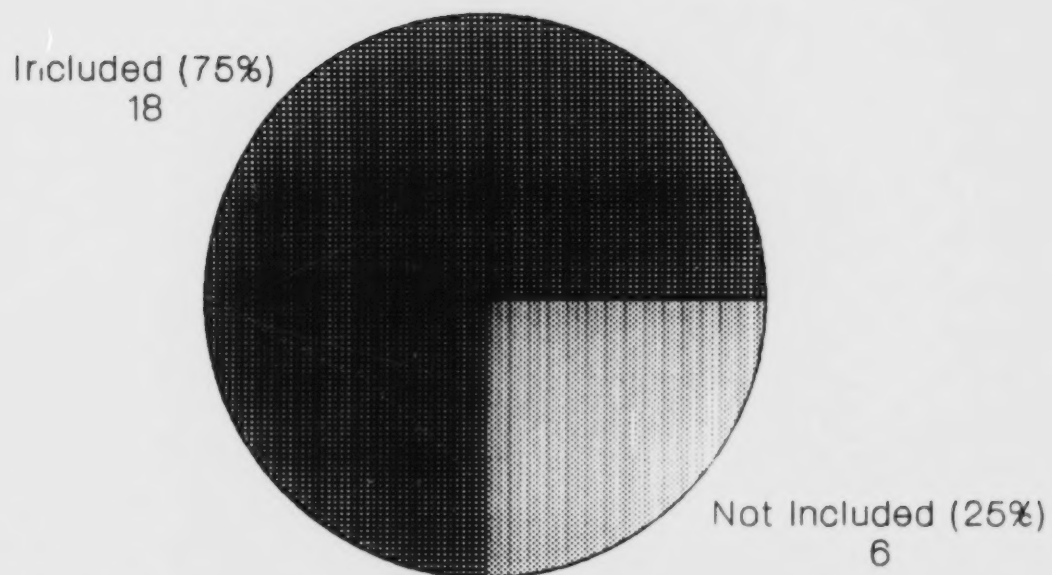


Figure 2

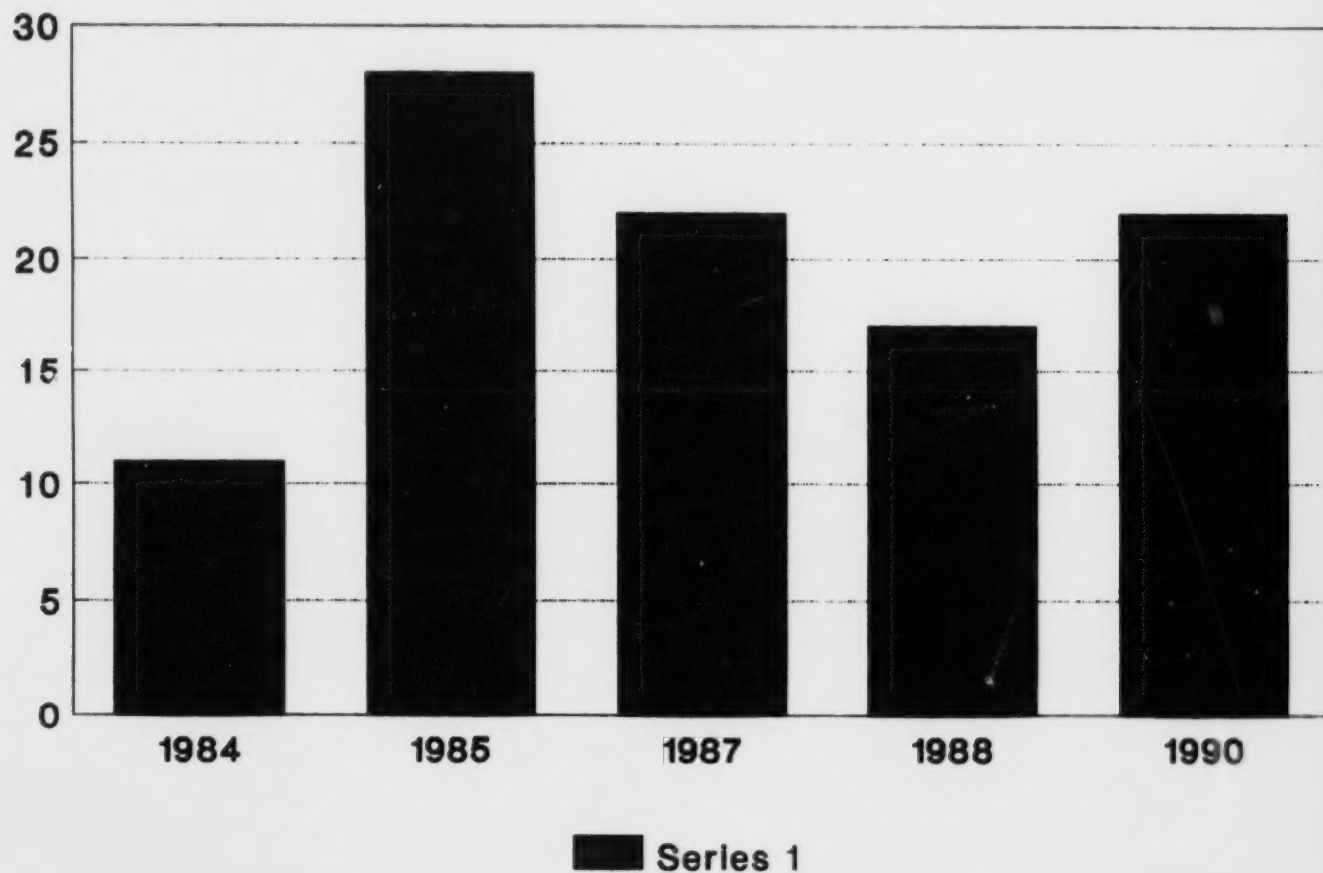
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Vietnam Veterans Memorial Inclusion N-24

Figure 3

Vietnam Literature
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Publication Year Percentages *Vietnam V.P. 1984-1990*

Figure 4

